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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [AE](#)
SUBJECT: UAE SHAYKHS ON POTUS SPEECH, IMAGE OF AMERICA

REF: Abu Dhabi 0553

Classified by Ambassador Richard Olson, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Two senior members of the Nahyan family were very positive on the Cairo speech, and evinced high expectations. Shaykh Saif (who appears to be an ascendant power in the family) expressed appreciation for the President's bold decision to go forward with the 123 Agreement. END SUMMARY.

POTUS SPEECH IN CAIRO

¶2. (C) UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior Shaykh Saif bin Zayed Al-Nahyan told Ambassador that Emiratis were very much looking forward to the President's speech in Cairo. Saif said the choice of Cairo was a good one because it showed that the US was not ignoring the most populous Arab nation. He also welcomed the speech's backing by Al Azhar University. Saif concluded by saying that President Obama's ability to articulate US outreach to the Muslim world would go a long way toward undoing the damage caused by previous usage of the of the word "crusade" in a positive context.

¶3. (C) UAE Foreign Minister Shaykh Abdullah bin Zayid Al-Nahyan (AbZ) raised with Ambassador the subject of POTUS speech, saying that he had his "fingers crossed." From the context of the conversation, it was clear that this remark meant he expected the speech to advance the prospects for peace between the Arabs and Israel.

SHAYKH SAIF ON OVERALL RELATIONS WITH US

¶4. (C) Saif told Ambassador that the UAEG had really appreciated President Obama's decision to approve the 123 Agreement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation and so notify Congress. The UAE understood that the recent revelations of human rights problems (reftel) had put the Administration in a difficult position. The President's decision was therefore a courageous one, and one that showed that the US was a true friend to the UAE.

¶5. (C) Commenting on the good health care his nephew was receiving in the U.S. (Mayo Clinic), Saif said that humans need to benefit from one another (NOTE: Our consular section opened this past weekend to expedite visa issuance for Saif's nephew who was diagnosed with leukemia.) Patients seeking health care in the U.S. were often surprised at the existence of non-profit institutions delivering quality care; many Emiratis "changed their minds about America" when they realized this, he added. Moving beyond the erroneous images on television, Emiratis who visit see Americans as "normal" people "like us," he said, endorsing international travel as a means of broadening perspectives -- with a reference to his own eye-opening visit to China.

¶6. (C) He said many of his key staff were U.S. educated, and therefore their ideas sometimes clashed with his own U.K. schooling. All benefit from the exchange, he suggested, noting that the frames of reference gained from overseas experience between the ages of 18 and 25 are particularly impressionable -- and more valuable when Arab students do not cluster in a few schools. He was pleased that in the U.S. people simply ask where you are from, not whether you are an American citizen or not. They look at everyone as "locals."

¶7. (S/NF) COMMENT: Having recently been elevated to Deputy Prime Minister, Shaykh Saif is clearly an ascendant power within the Nahyan family, and the UAEG. Within the UAEG the MOI is increasingly assertive and somewhat independent. Within the family, Saif is the most senior of the second largest block of brothers (after the Bani Fatima), the five sons of Moza Al-Khaili. Since Zayid's marriage with Moza was one of the old man's last, the younger brothers are only now coming into prominence, and Shaykh Saif appears to be playing the role of their patron (he presided over the recent wedding of Shaykh Khaled, his full brother and youngest of Zayed's sons).

¶8. (S/NF) COMMENT CONTINUED: Given the opaque nature of cabinet reshuffles, it is difficult to say definitively why Saif was elevated, but it may have something to do with housecleaning after the Shaykh Issa scandal. Under this hypothesis, since the Nahyan family agreed to move against Issa, it was also necessary to remove other Shaykhs with personal problems from positions of authority (former DPM Sultan bin Zayid had a tumultuous youth; Hamdan bin Zayid is rumored to have had a drinking problem). And clearly, any action legal against Issa required having the Minister of Interior on board.

OLSON